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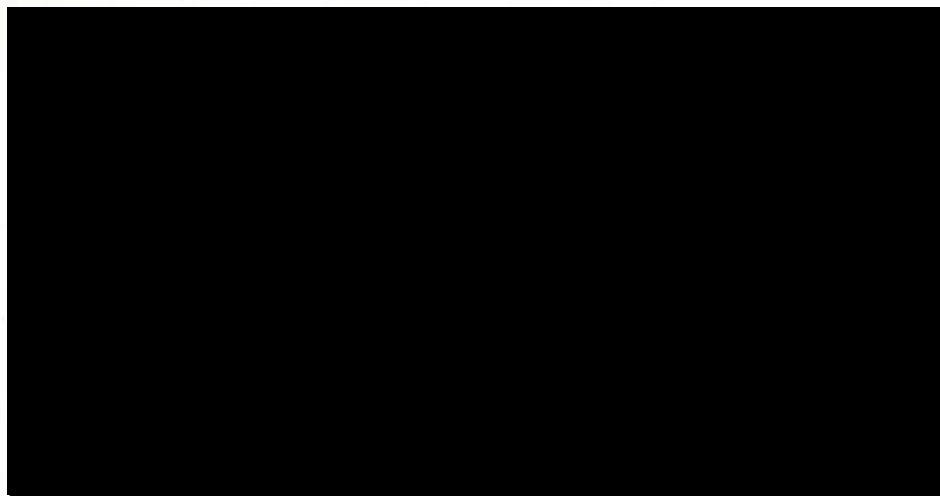
AN EXAMINATION OF THE STRUCTURE AND PROBLEMATICS OF
LIBERATION THEISM IN CONTEMPORARY BLACK THEOLOGY

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By
Ronald Clifton Potter

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Interdenominational Theological Center
Atlanta, Georgia



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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

In 1938, Dr. Benjamin E. Mays published his ground breaking study on Afro-American religion, entitled, The Negro's God. In this study Mays examined the various concepts of God within the Afro-American community from 1760 to 1937. Mays was able to identify three distinct perspectives relative to Afro-American theism.

The first pattern of response is essentially traditional and compensatory in character. It is traditional in the sense that it basically affirms historic, orthodox, biblical theism. This type of theism is essentially predicated upon a pre-scientific Weltanschauung and cosmology. Mays contends that this traditional theism has been severely called into question by modern science. This same perspective is considered compensatory because while it has an inner therapeutic value, it fails to enable black people to redress effectively the social conditions which oppress them.

The second religious pattern that Mays identified (and the focus of our study,) functions quite differently from the previous pattern. Mays insisted that those black religionists who affirm this second perspective:

...have put new wine into old bottles. They have on the whole, taken the idea of God, traditional or otherwise, and made it a useful instrument in supporting the growing consciousness of the kind of social adjustment needed. The ideas have been interpreted in social terms and there has been no attempt to abandon God.¹

Most representatives of this position contend that the traditional symbols of faith (e.g., God, Christ, sin, and salvation,) must be revised, modified, or reformulated in order to speak meaningful to oppressed people.

The third perspective that Mays identifies is one that fundamentally rejects all forms of theism; traditional-compensatory and revisionist alike. In this view God-concepts of all stripes are so flawed that they necessarily impede Afro-American liberation.

This paper is essentially a descriptive study of the socially progressive strain of Afro-American theism as it is reflected in contemporary black theological thought. This paper will examine the basic structure and problematics of this "black liberation theism."²

I. THE STRUCTURE OF BLACK LIBERATION THEISM

Methodological Framework of Black Theological Discourse

Benjamin E. Mays was one of the first black religious scholars to self-consciously employ a methodological framework in examining the differing modalities of Afro-American theism. Mays was trained in the socio-historical method at the University of Chicago. This methodology essentially emphasized that religion is fundamentally a phenomenon of the social experience within a given cultural period, and that religious beliefs can be understood as ways of attempting to come to terms with the circumstances of particular environments. In pursuing this method of studying religious beliefs, members of the "Chicago School" asked: Why did these set of beliefs arise and survive? What environmental and social factors influenced religious people of a particular period to meet the problems at issue in this manner?

Such members of the "Chicago School" as Shirley Jackson Case, Gerald Birney Smith, J. M. P. Smith, and Shailer Mathews developed and employed the socio-historical method to investigate all aspects of Christian faith. Mathews, in particular, utilized this new method in analyzing the evolution of Christian theism.³

Mathews believe that there was an empirical correlation between the environmental and social conditions of religious people and their conceptions of deity.

As mentioned earlier, Benjamin E. Mays was one of the first religious scholars to apply the socio-historical method to Afro-American religion. He discovered that there was a correlation between what Afro-Americans believed about God and their social environment. That is why Mays wrote regarding his treatise on black religion: "The most outstanding revelation of this study is the fact that the Negro's idea of God grows out of his social situation."⁴

Among contemporary black religious scholars Dr. James H. Cone has masterfully reexamined the relationship between Afro-American theism and social context. Contrary to much scholarly opinion, Cone contends that, "Theology is not universal language; it is interested language and thus is always a reflection of the goals and aspirations of a particular people in a definite social setting."⁵ The social context of black faith, according to Cone, is qualitatively different from its white counterpart. White Euro-American theology addresses itself to the cultural crises of western modernity, (e.g., alienation, anxiety, despair, spiritual emaciation, etc.), black faith must address the two basic challenges confronting Afro-Americans: that is, self-image and self-determination. People will do theology around what is hurting them most in the world, Cone contends, and what is hurting Afro-Americans most is social oppression due in part to white racism. The social context of black faith forced black Christians to pose ethical and not epistemological or ontological questions about God. Indeed, Cone argues that black people, did not need to know about Anselm's ontological

argument, Descarte's Cogito, ergo sum, and Kant's Ding an sich. Such were not their philosophical and theological problems as defined by their social reality. Blacks did not ask whether God existed or whether divine existence can be rationally demonstrated. Divine existence was taken for granted...The divine question which they addressed was whether or not God was with them in their struggle for liberation.⁶

Social context is not the only factor that informs the methodological framework of black liberation theism. Cognitive interest plays a crucial role in determining the character of black God-talk as well.⁷ First, it is important to note that the methodological structure undergirding much of contemporary western theology is informed by the "morality of scientific knowledge."⁸ In most types of theological orthodoxy, church pronouncements or biblical propositions assume normative status. In this particular paradigm the theologian is fundamentally loyal to either the church or biblical tradition. Conversely, the "modern" theologian is fundamentally loyal to the cognitive assumptions of the secular scientific culture. Theologian David Tracy writes regarding this new mode of theologizing the following:

In principle, the fundatmental loyalty of the the theologian qua theologian is to that morality of scientific knowledge which he shares with his colleagues, the philosophers, historians, and social scientists. No more than they, can he allow his own--or his traditions--beliefs to serve as warrants for his arguments. In fact, in all properly theological inquiry, the analysis should be characterized by those same ethical stances of autonomous judgement, critical reflection, and properly skeptical hard-mindedness, that characterize analysis in other fields.⁹

The particular "morality" governing black liberation theism is different. Black theologians are fundamentally loyal to the morality of emancipatory praxis. This perspective interprets the entire spectrum of Christian theology in such a manner that it becomes functional toward the economic, political, and social emancipation of black people.¹⁰ This praxis, however, should not be strictly identified with practice. Essentially, "praxis is correctly understood as the critical relationship between theory and practice whereby each is dialectically influenced and transformed by the other."¹¹ To be sure, the "morality" governing black liberation theism is no less intellectually rigorous than the one governing mainstream western theology. The exponents of liberation theism simply make explicit what has always been implicit within western academic theology: that is, all theological discourse is guided by a particular human interest. Biblical scholar Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza effectively speaks to this issue when she writes:

The basic insight of liberation theologies and their methodological starting-point is the insight that all theology knowingly or not is by definition always engaged for or against the oppressed. Intellectual neutrality is not possible in a historical world of exploitation and oppression.¹²

The "morality of emancipatory praxis" employed by black liberation theologians essentially calls into question the cognitive assumptions of mainstream western theology. In this respect,

black liberation theism "emancipates" western academic theology from its false notions of universality and methodological superiority.

Traditional and Non-Traditional Features
of Black Liberation Theism

Benjamin E. Mays contended in his classic study that Afro-American religious thought has historically been indifferent to modern reconceptions of God. Afro-Americans have generally adopted traditional notions of God. Accordingly, even those conceptions of God which foster social change still basically fall within the framework of classical Christian theism.

Most forms of contemporary black liberation theism can be considered "traditional" in their basic structure. Carlyle Fielding Stewart, in analyzing the liberation theism of James Cone wrote:

For Cone, God is not only the ground of being, but is primarily a being revealed in Scripture, history and the existential situation of the oppressed who liberates them from bondage. This traditional theistic notion is embodied in the idea of God as a being manifested through Yahweh and Jesus Christ. Any historical account of God's liberating activity in the Old and New Testaments clearly discloses God as a being who intercedes on behalf of the oppressed to free them from bondage.¹³

Cone's thinking essentially reflects the perspective of most black liberation theologians. God is conceived primarily as a liberating being. God is depicted as being actively involved in human history granting sight to the blind, releasing those held captive and setting at liberty those who are oppressed. In this sense then, God's

actions in history are construed as Heilsgeschichte (salvation-history) pointing toward the liberation of the oppressed.

C. Eric Lincoln has noted that the conception of a "warrior-God" has been prevalent throughout Afro-American history. Afro-Americans have always believed that God would fight their battles for them. God is one who can make the "wicked cease from troubling". The people of God can trust in the fact that God has "got the whole world in his hands". Lincoln has identified an important element of traditional-progressive Afro-American theism. This feature conceives of God as one who not only cares about the suffering of the poor and oppressed, but God actively empathizes with them and acts against those forces which seek to destroy them.¹⁴ The basic assumption within traditional liberation theism is the idea that freedom is a divinely initiated and achieved project.

God starts, sustains and brings to fruition the project of human freedom. Although God chooses to use human agents to accomplish the task of liberation, God is not necessarily bound to human instruments.

Some proponents of black liberation theism formulate less traditional notions of God's liberating nature. J. Deotis Roberts is one such theologian who, "stands somewhere between monotheism and panethism in his understanding of God."¹⁵ Roberts rejects the aspect of traditional liberation theism which contends that freedom is a divinely initiated and achieved project. He argues that such a position necessarily negates human freedom and responsibility. Accordingly, this traditional theism fosters a willingness among black

people to let God do for them what they should do for themselves. Roberts accuses Cone, in particular, of allegedly promoting such a theocentric perspective of liberation.

Roberts also rejects the position of many black religious and secular humanists. This sector contends that freedom is essentially a humanly initiated and achieved project. Theism, in general, is considered to be an impediment to black self-determination. Even the notion that God accomplishes socio-political liberation through human effort, (as postulated by liberation theism,) is perceived as an infringement of human freedom. Black humanists call upon the oppressed to take responsibility for their own deliverance. Hayward Henry, Jr., argues that:

Black Humanism...does not depend on God and gods to justify its position. It revolves around a people and their collective experiences rather than "a person", no matter how relevant he may be. We are the Messiah and only we can liberate ourselves. The experiences and insights of all historical figures are useful data for Black Humanism but no single person is "the black savior", neither Jesus nor Buddha nor Gandhi nor King nor Malcolm nor anyone but ourselves.¹⁶

Black humanists contend that in the absence of divinely revealed alternatives, the oppressed must realize that they, and they alone, are the sine qua non of any Messianic hope. Neither Yahweh, Jesus, Allah or Juju will lead them out of the land of bondage into the promised land. Black people are faced with the existential burden of saving themselves.

Roberts wants to argue that both God and human beings have a hand in the initiation and achievement of the project of freedom.

Roberts believes that divine grace allows human beings to be co-creators and co-laborers with God. To be sure, this insight is not novel. E. Eric Lincoln has noted that Afro-American religion, "embraces both notions of man's responsibility to work with God to accomplish his freedom, and man's responsibility to have consummate faith that God can handle the situation by himself."¹⁷

Perhaps the most non-traditional expression of black liberation theism is the type expoused by the Pan-African Orthodox Christian Church spearheaded by Jaramogi Abebe Agyeman. Jaramogi (also known as Albert Cleage, Jr.) serves as the Holy Patriarch of this growing black sect. The purpose of this black religious nationalist movement is to create a new black church that addresses itself to the struggle for liberation. Cleage's basic premise is that the black church is essential to the liberation struggle because it is the only institution really controlled by black people and is therefore capable of being restructured to serve the black revolution. Cleage contends that everything within the black church must be restructured: that is, its historical analysis, its theology, its ritual, everything.¹⁸ According to Cleage, Jesus did not come to establish a "spiritual" kingdom. Rather, Jesus was a "revolutionary black leader," a member of the Zealots, who sought to free Israel from a this-worldly oppression and bondage. The black Kingdom of God will be realized in this life and not in the next, maintains Cleage.

Cleage's concept of the nature of God is not clearly expressed in his two published works. Other than the declaration that black

people are divinely chosen and the claim that God is that divine power which empowers the black liberation struggle, Cleage really does not offer a substantive discourse on the nature of God. He does have some interesting things to say about the problematics of God's activity in the world, however. This particular discussion has tremendous bearing upon the issue of theodicy. This perspective of Cleage's will be examined later in this paper.

More recently, however, the Pan-African Orthodox Christian Church has begun to seriously reformulate its theistic perspective. One of the leaders of this movement has recently written:

The theology of the Pan-African Orthodox Christian Church is centered around a definition of God as the source of cosmic energy and creative intelligence manifested in all things and of which all things are a part. This theological formulation grows out of... attempting to interpret how the universe is put together in order to develop an intelligent conception of God.¹⁹

The emerging theism of the Pan-African Orthodox Christian Church attempts to synthesize elements of pre-modern African pantheism with features of modern western panetheism. Apparently, such impersonal conceptions of God as "cosmic energy", "creative intelligency", and "life-force", are considered to be more appropriate for the modern age than antiquated anthropomorphic appellations.

In examining the various types of black liberation theism, we can conclude that all forms basically function for the purpose of transforming the social condition of Afro-Americans. God is essentially conceived as that person, power, or life-force that enables

the oppressed to transform their dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows. In the following section we will raise some critical questions regarding the limitations of liberation theism.

II. THE LIMITATIONS OF BLACK LIBERATION THEISM

1. Methodological Problematics

One of the most common criticisms leveled at black liberation theism is that it is much too ideological. The very fact that its primary loyalty is to a morality of emancipatory praxis would, indeed, suggest some type of ideological bent. Over the years, several Afro-American religious scholars have suggested that black theology's avowed "advocacy" stance, and its continued employment of a "liberation motif", severely handicaps the efforts of black theologians to do hard-minded, objective, theological inquiry.

Some black religious scholars contend that the defective element within liberation theism is in its methodological structure. Cecil Wayne Cone perceptively describes this malady thus:

...tensions are created primarily by the theologians who erroneously concluded that the proper point of departure for a Black Theology should be black power, or liberation. Black theologians have used many different starting points...misunderstanding and/or misinterpreting what black religion is and missing altogether the fact that there can be no Black Theology which does not see as its primary focus or starting point the black religion it purports to represent.²⁰

Cecil Cone takes the argument a bit further and makes the contention that at the core of Afro-American religion lies the people's experience and encounter with the Almighty Sovereign God. Fundamentally then, the problem with black theology is that its starting point is an ideological commitment to socio-political liberation rather than to an investigation of the experience with the God who grounds the liberation. Accordingly, the initial task of the theologian is to excavate the "raw materials" of what constitutes black religious experience. The theologian should suggest some possible foundations for constructing an "archaeology" of Afro-American religion.²¹ Essentially, what is being said here is the notion that the theologian must first engage in phenomenological research before an interpretive framework is imposed upon the raw material.

2. God's Presence In History

To be sure, one of the cardinal tenets of most types of black liberation theism is the affirmation that God acts in history. This divine activity within human history should not be construed in a general sense, however. Rather, God is active in the particular and concrete struggles of oppressed people.²² To witness the destruction of racism, sexism, class exploitation, imperialism, and colonialism, is, in fact, to witness divine activity.

While the tenet of "divine activity in history" is central to black theology, it is also one of the most problematic features of liberation theism for a number of reason. We will concentrate on but a few of these.

The first problem is methodological in character. Some Afro-American religious scholars are beginning to question the extent to which the biblical motif of "God acting in history" is indigenous to black religion. Indeed, some scholars are beginning to suggest that this important motif might not be as salient within Afro-American religion as once thought. Phenomenological and historical studies in the area of Afro-American religion suggest that the divine presence is experienced within other realms besides human history. Charles Long has noted, for example, that the slave narratives combine and interweave the ordinary events with the transformation of the religious consciousness. Long writes:

It is not merely a case of God acting in history, for the historical events are not the locus of the activity, but then neither do we have a complete lack of concern for historical events in favor of a mystification of the consciousness. It is the combination of these two structures that is distinctive in these narratives; clues such as these might help us to understand the specific nature of the black religious consciousness.²³

Another difficulty with the concept of divine activity within history has to do with the meaning of religious language within the cultural setting of secular modernity. Langdon Gilkey has brilliantly delineated the problematics of this theological issue in an important essay entitled, "Cosmology, Ontology, and the Travail of Biblical Language,"²⁴ Gilkey argues that the problem with contemporary theology is that while its world view or cosmology is modern, its religious language is biblical and orthodox.

Put differently, contemporary theologians sometime refer to "the mighty acts of God" as if they actually took place the way the bible says they did. Since most western contemporary theologians are loyal to the "morality of scientific knowledge", they simply cannot mean what they say. Given this line of reasoning, the question is raised regarding the meaning of biblical language. If God does not really act within history, what is the meaningfulness of such language?

Like modern religious thought, some types of contemporary black theology reject supernaturalistic interpretations of God's actions in the world. Accordingly, God does not act independently of human endeavor. God always acts through the struggles of the oppressed in order to transform their social reality. The problem, however, is that contemporary black theologians continue to employ traditional, orthodox language when reference is made to what God is doing in the world.

A third problematic relative to God's activity in the world has to do with establishing public criteria for verifying God's actions. How do black theologians establish publically available criteria for adjudicating Christian truth-claims regarding divine activity? Black humanist, William R. Jones, contends that unless black theologians can provide religious skeptics with an instance of historical liberation brought about by God, then their assertions that God is a God of Liberation are simply meaningless.²⁵

Obviously, black theologians cannot supply skeptics with the kind of "public" verification that they desire. The veracity of divine activity in the world is going to have to be decided somewhere else.

III. SUMMARY

The modalities of Afro-American theism have never been static or immutable. The various distinctions that Mays make between Afro-American God-concepts should not be construed as absolute. Professor Gayraud Wilmore has noted that Afro-American religion has spawned both survivalist and liberationist traditions. Wilmore writes:

What may be called the liberation tradition in black religion also begins with the determination to survive, but because it is exterior rather than primarily interior...it goes beyond strategies of sheer survival to strategies of elevation—from "make do" to "must do more". Both strategies are basic to Afro-American life and culture. They are intertwined in complex ways...Both are responses to reality in a white dominating world. Both arise from the same religious sensibility.²⁶

To be sure, those who would attempt to force an absolute wedge between the various types of black theism basically misunderstand the nature of black religion. Fundamentally, "pure" species of black theism are nonexistent. Every type of God-concept has traits of other theistic expressions embedded within it. While black theology's concept of God is primarily informed by the liberation tradition within Afro-American Christianity, other theistic tendencies emerge from time to time reflecting the multidimensional character of black faith.

In summary, the two most salient forms of black liberation theism are: 1) emancipatory neo-traditionalism, and 2) emancipatory neo-modernism. In the first type, the only change that is made in the old theism is that it becomes politicized. Notwithstanding the politicization however, the metaphysical structure of traditional theism remains intact. God is still essentially conceived as a personal being. God hears the cries of the oppressed and is thus moved by compassion to liberate them from bondage. Emancipatory neo-traditionalism affirms that God is all-powerful, all-loving, and all-righteous. Major representatives of this perspective would be James Cone, J. Deotis Roberts, Gayraud Wilmore, and Allan Boesak.

In the second type of theism, God is conceived as an impersonal life-force and energy field. God does not actually act on behalf of the oppressed since purposeful action is necessarily an attribute of personal being. Rather, the oppressed are energized by that ultimate reality which grounds all existence: indeed, a reality powerful enough to enable the oppressed to liberate themselves. The late Howard Thurman and Albert Cleage's Pan-African Orthodox Christian Church are major representatives of this position.

Black theologians do not generally raise speculative and metaphysical questions about God. As indicated earlier, black social reality dictates other kinds of questions. Black Theology is fundamentally concerned about the "cash value" of the concept of God. If the concept of God (whether neo-traditional or neo-modernist) does

not make a difference within the actual experience of black people, then the concept must be jettisoned.

Black Theology contends that the metaphysical essence of God cannot be divorced from divine activity in the world. There is no way to understand the nature or being of god apart from understanding God's actions in history. In this respect, the being of God is revealed through the activity of God.

To be sure, black liberation theism is not without its problems. First, black liberation theologians must begin to take historical and phenomenological studies more seriously in their theological inquiries. Their loyalty to the morality of emancipatory praxis must be balanced with a commitment to critical research. The two must go hand in hand.

Secondly, black theologian's notion of divine activity suffers from certain epistemic problems. If the activity of God is primarily manifested through the struggles of the oppressed, how does one know where human ideology begins and God's activity begin? Put differently, are we to identify all of the political actions of the oppressed with the activity of God? If not, then how do we clearly distinguish between the two? These two are questions which black theologians must critically analyze if their theistic conceptions are to be credible.

ENDNOTES

¹Benjamin E. Mays, The Negro's God (Boston: Chapman and Grimes, 1938; reprint ed., Atheneum, 1973), p. 218.

²Although Mays never designated social emancipatory God-concepts as "black liberation theism," the term is by no means unwarranted. The term certainly describes this same strain of theism as reflected in contemporary black theology. The theological substance of the term is most salient in James H. Cone's A Black Theology of Liberation (New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1970); and also, God of the Oppressed (New York: Seabury Press, 1975). Technically, the term was first employed by J. Deotis Roberts in an article entitled, "Black Liberation Theism" in The Journal of Religious Thought 33, No.1 (Spring-summer, 1976): 25-35.

³See Schailer Mathews, The Growth of the Idea of God (New York: MacMillan, 1931).

⁴Mays, The Negro's God, p. 254.

⁵Cone, God of the Oppressed, p. 39.

⁶Ibid, pp. 54 & 55.

⁷For a look at how the various modalities of theoretical thought are shaped by cognitive interest, see, Jürgen Habermas', Knowledge and Human Interests (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971)

⁸For an excellent discussion of how this "morality of modern knowledge" has completely transformed contemporary theology see, Van A. Harvey's The Historian and the Believer: The Morality of Historical Knowledge and Christian Belief (New York: McMillan, 1966).

⁹David Tracy, Blessed Rage for Order (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), p. 7.

¹⁰See James H. Cone's, Black Theology and Black Power (New York: Seabury Press, 1969), pp. 120-121.

¹¹Tracy, Blessed Rage for Order, p. 243.

¹²Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Toward A Feminist Hermeneutics: Biblical Interpretation and Liberation Theology" in The Challenge of Liberation Theology, ed., Brian Mahan and L. Dale Richesin (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1981), p. 93.

¹³Carlyle Fielding Stewart, III, "A Comparative Analysis of Theological-Ontology and Ethical Method in the Theologies of James H. Cone and Howard Thurman" (Ph. D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1982), p. 63.

¹⁴See C. Eric Lincoln's Race Religion and The Continuing American Dilemma (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984), ch. 2.

¹⁵J. Deotis Roberts, "Black Liberation Theism" The Journal of Religious Thought: p. 25.

¹⁶Hayward Henry, Jr., "Toward A Religion of Revolution: in The Black Scholar, vol 2, no., 4 (December, 1970), p. 31.

¹⁷Lincoln, Continuing American Dilemma, p. 55.

¹⁸See Albert Cleage, Jr., Black Christian Nationalism: New Directions for the Black Church, (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1972), p. 34.

¹⁹Donald Lester, "A New Vision for the Black Church: An Introduction to the Pan-African Orthodox Christian Church" paper presented at Black Theology course at the Interdenominational Theological Center, Atlanta, Ga., Fall, 1983.

²⁰Cecil Wayne Cone, The Identity Crisis in Black Theology, (Nashville, Tennessee: AMEC, 1975), p. 6.

²¹Theologian Edward Farley represents a small cadre of contemporary religious thinkers who have appropriated the late Michel Foucault's metaphor of "archaeology" in doing various phenomenological studies. Accordingly, the term "suggests an investigation of the strata which underlie belief, symbols, actions, and instructions". Farley, Ecclesial Reflection (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), p. 4. As applied to the Afro-American context the term may suggest an historico-phenomenological investigation of the social life-worlds, religio-cultural life situations (sitz im leben), and preconscious faith-worlds of African-American people. For further elaboration on this concept see

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Michel Foucault's, The Archaeology of Knowledge, trans. A.M.S. Smith (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

²²Black Theology is not the only religious perspective that affirms the contextualization of divine revelation. Jewish religious thought has traditionally affirmed similar notions. Emil L. Fackenheim has suggested that Jewish religious thought has always situated the divine presence within the particularity of the Jewish experience. He states: "If God is ever present in history, this is not a presence-in-general but rather a presence to particular men in particular situations. To be sure, unless it were that of a mere tribal deity, such a presence must have universal implications. these implications, however, are manifest only in the particular; and they make of the men to whom they are manifest, not universalistic philosophers who rise above their situation, but rather witnesses, in, through, and because of their particularity to the nations," See Fackenheim's, God's Presence In History (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1972), p. 8.

²³Charles H. Long, "Perspectives for A Study of Afro-American Religion in the United States" in History of Religions, Vol. 11, No 1 (August, 1971), p. 64.

²⁴Langdon B. Gilkey, "Cosmology, Ontology, and the Travail of Biblical Language" in The Journal of Religion, 41 (1961), pp 194-205.

²⁵For a brilliant discussion on this subject, see William R. Jones', Is God a White Racist? (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1973).

²⁶Gayraud S. Wilmore, Black Religion and Black Radicalism, 2nd ed., rev. and enl. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1983), p. 227.

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